
Title: a small leather book

Author: Clark Ashton Smith

From the Crypts of
Memory (Text taken from
original manuscripts) -+-

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Aeons of aeons ago, in an
epoch whose marvellous
worlds have crumbled, and
whose mighty suns are
less than shadow, I dwelt
in a star whose course,
decadent from the high,
irremeable heavens of the
past, was even then
verging upon the abyss in
which, said astronomers,
its immemorial cycle
should find a dark and
disastrous close.

Ah, strange was that
gulf-forgotten star-how
stranger than any dream
of dreamers in the
present, or than any
vision that hath risen
upon visionaries in their
retrospection of the
universal Past: There,
thru inestimable cycles of
a history whose records
were beyond the
computation of savants,
the dead had come to
infinitely outnumber the
living: And, reared of a
stone not destructible
save in the enormous
furnace of suns, their
cities rose beside those
of the living like Titan
metropoli whose mighty
precincts have begun to
overgloom the vicinal
villages.

And over all was
the black, funereal vault

of the cryptic heavens -
a dome of infinite
shadows wherein the
dismal sun, suspended like
a sole, enormous lamp,
failed to illumine, and,
drawing back its fires
from the face of the
irresolvable ether, threw
a baffled and despairing
beam on the vague,
remote horizons, and
shrouded vistas
interminate of the
visionary land.

We were a sombre,
melancholy people, who
dwelt beneath the palls
twilight and silence
thrown about the
towering tombs and
monuments of the Past.
In our veins was the chill
of the ancient night of
Time, with a premonition
of the lentor of Lethe:
over us, like invisible
vampires, brooded the
innumerable hours on their
sable and unremoving
pinions: the very skies
were fraught with
oppression, and we
breathed beneath them as
in a sepulcher, forever
sealed with all its
stagnancies of corruption
and of darkness.

Vaguely we lived, and
loved as in dreams-the
dim and mystic dreams
that hover upon the
verge of unfathomable
sleep. We felt for our
women, with their pale
and spectral beauty, the
same desire that the
dead may feel for the
phantom lilies of Hadean
meads.

Our days were
spent in roaming through
the ruins of lone and
immemorial cities, or in
the vast and shadowy
fanés from whose awful

and everlasting glooms of
elder mystery, the
simulachres of
century-forgotten gods
looked forth with
unalterable eyes on the
hopeless heavens, and saw
but night and oblivion. Or,
wandering through ashen
fields of perennial autumn,
we found the flowers of
wan funebrial immortelles,
that wept with a
melancholy dew by the
flowing silence of
Acherontic waters.

And one by one we died,
and were lost in the dust
of accumulated time. We
knew the years as a
passing of shadows, and
death itself as the
yielding of twilight unto
night.